Companion Story to "She" and "Allan Quatermain

Continued from Preceding Page

on the ground, for when it touched that mark he would return for his

Is this rather dreadful silence heard a dry little cough which I knew came from the throat of Hans and was his method of indi-cating that he had a remark to

What is it?" I asked, with irritation, for it was annoying to see him seated there on the ground fanning himself with the remains of a hat and staring vacantly at

"Nothing, Baas, or rather, only this, Baas: Those hyenas of Zulus are even more afraid of the Great Medicine than were the cannibals up north, since the maker of it is nearer to them, Baas. You remember. Baas, they knelt to it, as it were, when we were going out of Zululand."

"Well, what of it, now that we are going into Zululand?" I inquired sharply. "Do you want me to show

it to them?" "No, Baas. What is the use, seeing that they are ready to let you pass, also the Lady Sad-Eyes, and me and the cattle with driver and voorlooper, which is better still, and all the other goods. So what have you to gain by showing them the medicine? But perchance if it were on the neck of Umslopogaas and he showed it to them and brought it to their minds that those who touched him who is in the shadow of Zikali's Great Medicine, or aught that is his, die within three moons in this way or in that-well, Baas, who knows?" and again he coughed dryly and stared at the sky.

I translated what Hans had said in Dutch to Umslopogaas, who remarked indifferently:

"This little yellow man is well named Light-in-Darkness; at least the plan can be tried, if it fails there is always time to die."

So, thinking that this was an occasion on which I might properly do so, for the first time I took off the talisman which I had worn for so long, and Umslopogaas put it over his head and hid it beneath his blanket.

A little while later the messengers returned and this time the capt in himself came with them, as he said, to greet me, for I knew him slightly, and we had dealt together about some cattle. After a friandly chat be turned to the matter of Umslopogaas, explaining the ca e at some length. I said that I orite understod his position, but the it was a very awkward thinginforfere with a man who was al verrer of the Great Medof Tivali ftself. When he hand this his eyes almost started co t of his head.

Than he asked to see Umslopo-

d i not overhear their converon, but the end of it was that t'mslopogaas came and said in a land voice so that no one could miss a single word, that as resistarce was useless and he did not wish me, his friend, to be involved in any trouble, together with his men he had agreed to accompany this king's captain to the royal knaal, where he had been guaranteed a fair trial as to certain false charges which had been brought

against him.

He adde that the king's captain had sworn upon the Great Medicine of the Opener-of-Roads to give him safe conduct and attempt no mischief against him which, as was well known throughout the land, was an oath that could not be broken by anyone who wished to continue to look

upon the sun. I asked the captain if these things were so, also speaking in a loud voice. He replied, Yes, since his orders were to take Umslopogaas alive if he might. He was only to kill him if he would not

Afterwards, while pretending to give him certain articles out of the wagon. I had a few private words with Umslopogaas, who told me that the arrangement was that he should be allowed to escape at night with his people.

"Be sure of this, Macumazahn," he said, "that if I do not escape, neither will that Captain, since I walk at his side and keep my axe. and at the first sign of treachery the axe will enter the house of

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that thick head of his and make

friends with the brain inside. "Macumazahn," he added, "we have made a strange journey to-gether and seen such things as I did not think the world had to show. Also I have fought and killed Rezu in a mad battle of ghosts and men which alone was worth all the trouble of the journey. Now it has come to an end, which everything must, and we part, but as I believe, not for always. I do not think that I shall die on this journey with the cap-tain, though I do think that others will die at the end of it," he added grimly, a saying which at the time I did not understand.

"It comes into my heart, Macumazahn, that in that land of witches and wizards yonder, the spirit of prophecy got caught in my moocha and crept into my inside. Now that spirit tells me that we shall meet again in the after years and stand together in a great fray, which will be our last, as I believe that the White Witch said. Or, perhaps, the spirit lives in Zikali's Medicine which has gone down my throat and comes out of it in words. I cannot say, but I pray that is a true spirit, since although you are white and I am black and you are small and I am big, and you are gentle and cunning, whereas I am fierce and as open as the blade of my own axe, yet I love you as well, Macumazahn, as though we were born of the same mother and had been brought up in the same kraal. Now that captain waits and grows doubtful of our talk, so farewell. I will return the Great Medicine to Zikali, if I live, and if I die he must send one of the ghosts that serve him to

fetch it from among my bones. "Farewell also to you, Yellow Man," he went on to Hans, who had appeared, hovering about like a dog that is doubtful of its welcome, "well are you named Light-in-Darkness and glad am I to have met you, who have learned from you how a snake moves and strikes, and how a jackal thinks and avoids the snare. Yes, farewell, for the spirit within me does not tell me that you and I shall meet again."

Then he lifted the great axe, gave me a formal salute, naming me "Chief and Father, Great Chief and Father from of Old," thereby acknowledging my superfority over him, a thing that he had never done before, and as he did, so did Coroko and the other Zulus, adding to their salute many titles of praise. In another minute he had gone with the king's captain, to whose side, I noted, he clung lovingly, his long, thin fingers playing about the horn handle of the axe that was named Inkosikaas and groan maker.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Allan Delivers the Message.

NCE more I sat in the Black Kloof face to face with old Zikali "So you have got back safely,

Macumazahn, Well, I told you you would, did I not? As for what happened to you upon the journey, let it be, for now that I am old, long stories tire me and I daresay that there is nothing wonderful about this one. Where is the charm I lent you? Give it back, now that it has served its turn."

"I have not got it, Zikali. I passed it on to Umslopogaas of the Axe to save his life from the King's men."

"Oh, yes, so you did! I had forgotten. Here it is," and opening his robe of fur he showed me the hideous little talisman hanging about his neck, then added, "would you like a copy of it, Macumazahn, to keep as a memory? If so, I will

carve you one."

"No." I answered. "I should not.

Has Umslopogaas been here?"

"Yes, he has been and gone again, which is one of the reasons I do not wish to hear your tale a second time."

"Where to? The Town of the People of the Axe" "No. Macumazahn, he came thence, or so I understood, but thither he will return no more."

"Why not, Zikali?"

"Because after his fashion he made trouble there and left some dead behind him, one Lousta, I believe, whom he had appointed to be chief while he was away, and a woman called Monazi, who was his wife, or Lousta's wife, or the wife of both of them, I target which. It is said that he cut off this woman's head with a sweep of the axe and made Lousta fight him till he fell, which the fool did almost before he had lifted his shield. It served him right who should have made sure that Umslopogaas was dead before he wrapped himself in his blanket and took the woman to cook his porridge."

"Where has he gone to?" I asked without surprise, for this news did not astonish me.

"I neither know nor care, Macumazahn. To become a wanderer, I suppose."

The fate of your friends does not trouble you over much, Openerof-Roads," I said, with sarcasm. "Not at all. Macumazahn, because

I have none. The only friends of the old are those whom they can turn to their own ends, and if these fail them they find others." . "I understand, Zikali, and know,

He laughed in his strange way

now what to expect from you."

and answered: "Aye, and it is good, good in the future as in the past, for you, Macumazabn, who are brave in your own fashion, without being a fool like Umslopogaas, and, although you know it not, like some master smith forge my assegats out of the red ore I give you, tempering them in the blood of men, and yet keep your mind innocent and your hands clean. Such friends are useful to such as I. Macuma-

zahn, and must be well paid in those goods that please them."

The old wizard brooded for a space, while I reflected upon his amazing cynicism, which interest-ed me in a way, for the extreme of immorality is as fascinating to study as the extreme of virtue and often more so. Then jerking up his great head, he asked suddenly: "What message had the White

Queen for me?" "She said that you troubled her too much at night in dreams,

"Aye, but if I cease to do so, ever she desires to know the reason why, for I hear her asking me in the voices of the wind, or the twittering of bats. After all she is a woman. Mactimazahn, and it must be dull sitting alone from year to year with naught to stay her appetite save the ashes of the past, so dull that I wonder, having once meshed you in her web. how she found the heart to let you go before she had sucked out your life and spirit. But what other message had she for the poor old s vage witch-doctor whose talk

wearies her so much at night?" Then I told him of the picture that she had shown me in the wa-

Zikali listened intently to every

word, then broke into a peal of his unholy laughter.
"Cho-ho!" he laughed, "so all goes
well, though the road he long, since
whatever this White One may have

shown you in the fire of the heav-ens above she could show you nothing but truth in the water of the earth below, for that is the law of our company of seers. You have worked well for me, Macumazahn, and you have had your fee, the fee of the vision of the dead which you desired above all earthly things.

"Aye," I answered indignantly, "a fee of bitter fruits whereof the Juice burns and twists the mouth and the stones still stick fast within the gizzard. I tell you, Zikali, that she stuffed my heart with lies.'

"I daresay, Macumazahn, I daresay; but they were very pretty lies, were they not? And after all, I am sure that there was wisdom in them, as you will discover when you have thought them over for a score of years. Lies, lies—all is lies! But behind the lies stands Truth, as the White Witch stands behind her veil. You drew the veil, Macumazahn, and saw that beneath which brought you to your knees.

Why, it is a parable. Wander on through the Valley of Lies till at last it takes a turn and, glitter-



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ing in the sunshine, glittering like gold, you perceive the Mountain of everlasting Truth, sought of all men but found by few. Lies, lies—all is lies! Yet behind, I tell you, beauteous and eternal, stands the Truth, Macumazahn. Oho-ho! Oho-ho! Fare you well, Watcher-by-

Night! Fare you well, Feeker after THE END.

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She could not help noticing those ugly nails "What a pity", she thought

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